

Harry Soviak

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2011 with funding from
LYRASIS Members and Sloan Foundation

<http://www.archive.org/details/harrysoviak1935100phil>

This catalog and the exhibition which it accompanies
are a memorial tribute to

Harry Soviak

artist, educator, colleague and friend
from the Philadelphia Colleges of the Arts

Harry Soviak

(1935 - 1984)

A Retrospective Exhibition

February 28 - March 29, 1986
Rosenwald-Wolf Gallery
Philadelphia Colleges of the Arts
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

This exhibition has been supported, in part,
by the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts.
This catalog has been made possible by
the Painting/Drawing Department of the
Philadelphia Colleges of the Arts;
The J. Aron Charitable Foundation, Inc., New York;
and the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts.

Copyright 1986
Philadelphia Colleges of the Arts
Library of Congress
Catalog Card Number: 86-60154
Design: Joseph Rapone
Color Plates: Innovation Printing
Photography:
Plates 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12: Jerry Cain
Plate 2: The Estate of Vincent D'Aquila, New York
Plates 8, 9: Pam Adler, Inc., New York
Letterpress Printing & Binding: Irish Pig Press and
Krupp McGrath Editions

In an edition of 500 this is number . . .

In my forty-seven years of association with the Philadelphia Colleges of the Arts I have served with an unusual number of artists/teachers. Some were excellent teachers, some were excellent artists, and most were both. Harry Soviak, however, stands out as one of the finest of those who excelled in all categories. Not only was he an extraordinary artist/teacher, but also that rare kind of person who could combine professional work with collegiate duties and find the personal insights that enabled one to be a particularly fine department chairman. Harry did chair the Painting and Drawing Department for six years, but he resisted all my efforts to have him seek the Dean's position at PCA, simply saying that he had no interest in anything other than his work and his students. Such was the measure of the man and his determination to be an excellent artist/teacher. He certainly was that. I mourn his death, but in his works, I can celebrate his life.

Richard H. Reinhardt
Dean, College of Art and Design

A memorial service for Harry Soviak was held at the Philadelphia Colleges of the Arts on Tuesday, November 20, 1984. Three fellow faculty members spoke at the service. Their eulogies are printed on the following pages in the order in which they were presented.

It is always intriguing when we look at the work of an artist that we admire and have been moved by to find that the relationship between the shape of those works and the shape of the artist's life and the shape of the world have, on the surface, no connection but under the surface have strange and mysterious connections that confirm the work and the life and inform the shape of the world.

Thinking first about Harry Soviak's work and it's wit and sensitivity and its ability to stay in the mind in ways that move beyond wit and the discrete particulars of sensitivity - to touch upon universal awarenesses, the mysterious centers of delight and affirmation - thinking about those works that have become part of us, we are sort of forced into that area of thought that we would prefer to ignore or avoid; what has this body of work, that so articulately celebrates life, to do with the incredible shortness of time? But as soon as we ask the question we know from our experience of Harry that his positiveness and openness were innate, a gift, if that is the right, often misused, word, that enabled him to make the works that are like the memory of the man. Whatever else Harry's works might mean, they seem to mean that what he saw and felt and made justify our epiphanies, those heightened waves of experience that close in on unexpected images.

Thinking of Harry as a teacher one is caught up in what one heard and overheard. Again, his positiveness and his ability to find that which deserved praise in a student's work, often uncovering it in areas we as a whole had missed. His ability to care about the student and the ability to renew that caring year after year. Harry's teaching was permeated with a warmth that enveloped the larger meanings and an eye for the details of making that protect a work from triviality. He saw large and small and made their interaction significant. A lot of people were lucky to have Harry as their teacher.

And lastly, thinking of Harry the man, which of course includes the painter and the teacher. He seemed to know things that we sometimes glimpse but seldom see for long - a positiveness toward life, hidden causes for celebration beyond bitterness, an ability to listen sympathetically to our complaints and anxieties and join with us in our triumphs. That sympathy and the understanding that was always there, they were something special, not too often encountered, more like ideals than actual characteristics, but they were there - dependably so - with Harry, and as we try to come to grips with who he was and how lucky we were to have known him, we realize that we will have to do an awful lot of searching to find his like - he was an uncommon man.

Larry Day

Checklist of the Exhibition

All dimensions are given in inches:
height precedes width precedes depth.

Untitled (dash study)

Crayon on paper
1968
18 3/4 x 16
The Estate of Vincent D'Aquila
New York

Untitled (dot study)

Crayon on paper
1968
12 3/4 x 9 1/2
The Estate of Harry Soviak,
Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,
New York

Beach Scene

Pencil, ink and collage on paper
1969
7 1/4 x 4 3/4
The Estate of Harry Soviak,
Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,
New York

French I

String and paper tube
1963
77 3/4 x 17 x 17
The Estate of Harry Soviak,
Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,
New York

French V

String and paper tube
1963
77 3/4 x 17 x 17
The Estate of Harry Soviak,
Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,
New York

Iris

String and paper tube
1963
21 3/4 x 4 x 4
The Estate of Vincent D'Aquila,
New York

Oriole III

String and paper tube
1963
102 x 8
The Estate of Harry Soviak,
Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,
New York

Black and White Teeter

Diptych
Wood, paint, glass, string and
paper tube
1964
17 1/2 x 19 1/8 x 6 1/8 (each)
The Estate of Harry Soviak,
Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,
New York

Biography

Born in Lorain, Ohio, May 25, 1935.
Died in New York, New York, November 5, 1984.

Education

1953-55

Bowling Green University, Ohio

Summer 1956

The Haystack Mountain School of Crafts,
Liberty, Maine

1957

Cranbrook Academy of Art,
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, BFA

1958-59

Buenos Aires Fellowship Convention,
Haiti

1959

Cranbrook Academy of Art, MFA

Teaching

1963-84

Philadelphia Colleges of the Arts
Fabric Design Department:
Assistant Professor, 1963-71
Acting Director, 1967-68

Painting/Drawing Department:

Professor, 1971-84
Assistant Chairman, 1971-74
Co-Chairman, 1974-77

Administration:

Director of Summer School Program, 1971-73

Award:

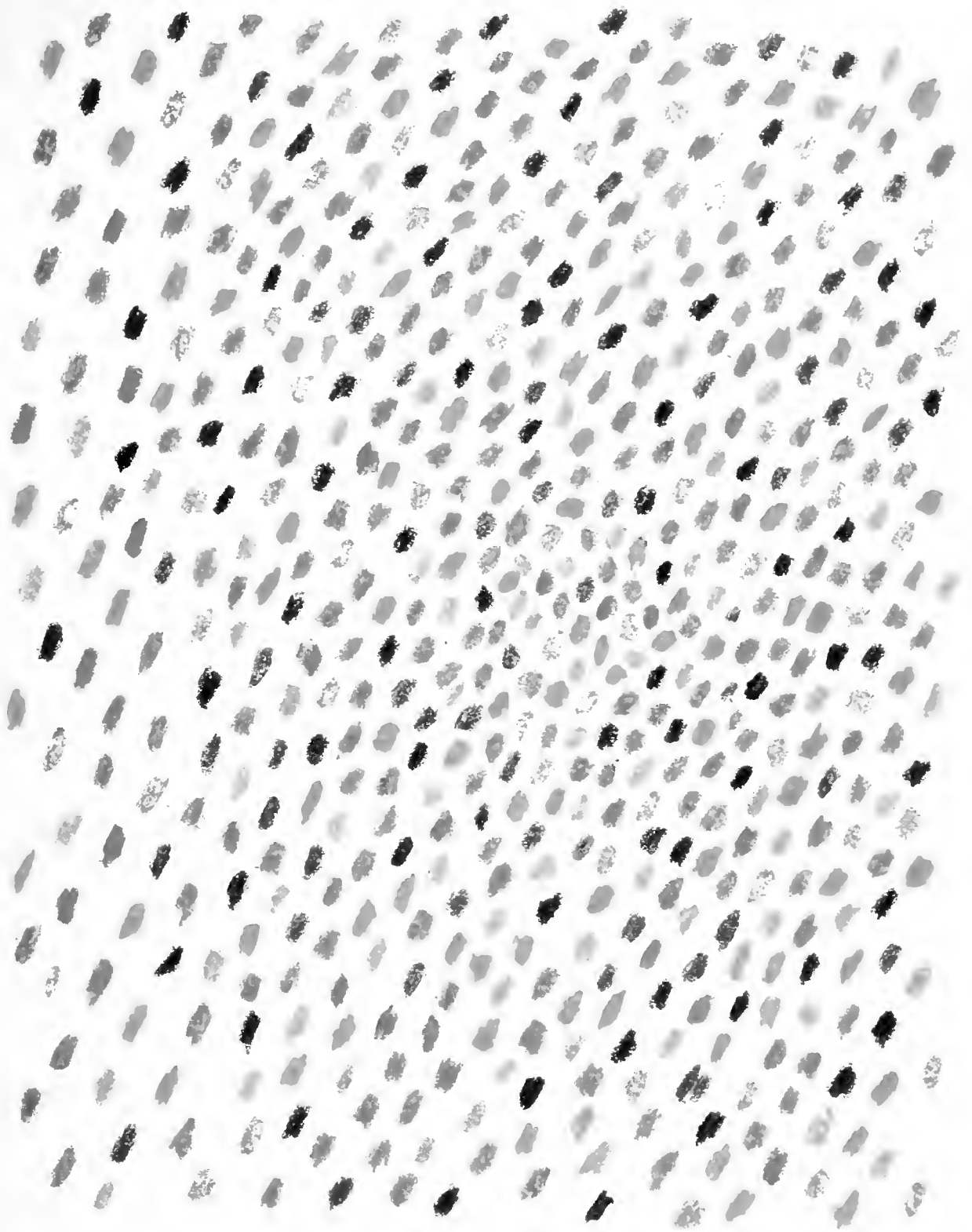
PCA Venture Fund Grant, 1984

Committees:

Academic Council
Faculty Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure
Faculty Council
Painting/Drawing Department Exhibitions Committee
PCA Handbook Committee
PCA Space Planning Committee

1965-66

New York University, New York
Art Education Department



Untitled
Crayon on paper
1958

Activity in Captivity

Wood, paper and glass

1965

8 1/4 x 6 1/2 x 3 (closed)

8 1/4 x 13 1/4 x 1 1/2 (open)

The Estate of Harry Soviak,

Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,

New York

Untitled

Wood, paper and glass

1965

8 1/4 x 6 1/2 x 3 (closed)

8 1/4 x 13 1/4 x 1 1/2 (open)

The Estate of Harry Soviak,

Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,

New York

Double Window Still Life

Collage

1966

18 1/2 x 24 3/8

The Estate of Harry Soviak,

Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,

New York

Etruscan Bouquet

Collage

1968

20 x 26

The Estate of Harry Soviak,

Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,

New York

Red Smoke

Collage

1968

26 x 20

The Estate of Harry Soviak,

Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,

New York

City Scarecrow

Watercolor, thread and

collage on paper

1969

41 x 30 3/4

The Estate of Harry Soviak,

Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,

New York

Snail Mail

Collage

1969

18 1/4 x 24 3/16

Collection of Robert Keyser,

Quakertown, Pennsylvania

Black Tulips

Watercolor on paper

1973

18 x 24

Collection of Rachel Bok Goldman,

Chicago

The Gray Vase

Watercolor on paper

1973

23 1/4 x 17 1/2

Collection of Marian Locks,

Philadelphia

One - Person Exhibitions

1958

Le Centre d'Art, Port-au-Prince, Haiti

1964

Richard Feigen Gallery, Chicago

Feigen/Herbert Gallery, New York

1967

Richard Feigen Gallery, New York

Wooster School, Danbury, Connecticut

1970

Richard Feigen Gallery, New York

Marian Locks Gallery, Philadelphia

1973

Marian Locks Gallery, Philadelphia

1976

Marian Locks Gallery, Philadelphia

1978

Marian Locks Gallery, Philadelphia

1980

Arthur Roger Gallery, New Orleans

1981

Marian Locks Gallery, Philadelphia

Orion Editions, New York

Arthur Rogers Gallery, New Orleans

1982

Pam Adler Gallery, New York

Meredith Gallery, Baltimore, Maryland

1983

Pam Adler Gallery, New York

Roger Ramsay Gallery, Chicago

1985

"Harry Soviak Memorial Retrospective, 1958-1984,"

Pam Adler Gallery, New York



Installation view of columns,
Feigen/Herbert Gallery, New York, 1964.



Red Smoke
Collage
1968



Black Tulips
Watercolor on paper
1973

Summer Flower with Details of a Persian Miniature

Watercolor on paper
1973
23 1/2 x 17 3/4
Collection of Marian Locks,
Philadelphia

Iris

Watercolor on paper
1976
10 x 7
Collection of Edith and Albert Neff,
Philadelphia

Tulip

Watercolor on paper
1976
11 7/8 x 8 3/4
Collection of Gabriele Windeck Lee,
Philadelphia

Tulips and White Daffodils

Watercolor on paper
1976
24 x 18
Collection of Alma Newman,
New York

Untitled

Watercolor on paper
1977
16 x 12
Collection of Dolores and Michael Gaughan,
Wyncote, Pennsylvania

Chino III

Pochoir
1978
30 x 22 1/2
Courtesy of Barbara Gladstone Gallery,
New York

Daffodils and Peach Blossoms

Watercolor on paper
1978
30 1/2 x 22
Collection of Marian Locks,
Philadelphia

Etruscan Bouquet

Watercolor on paper
1978
24 3/4 x 30 1/2
The Estate of Harry Saviak,
Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,
New York

Flowers Scottered Before an Early Landscape - Fictitious

Watercolor on paper
1978
30 x 40
The Estate of Harry Saviak,
Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,
New York

Selected Group Exhibitions

1958

Howard Wise Gallery, Cleveland, Ohio

1963

"New Media and Pop Art," Albright-Knox Art
Gallery, Buffalo, New York

1964

Feigen/Palmer Gallery, Los Angeles
The Wilmington Society of Fine Arts, Delaware

1965

"The Box Show," Byron Gallery, New York

"A New York Collector Selects," The San Francisco
Museum of Modern Art, California

Daniels Gallery, New York

"White on White," The DeCordova Museum, Lincoln,
Massachusetts

1966

"Art in the Mirror," The Museum of Modern Art,
New York (traveling exhibition circulated through 1968)

"Drawings, New York, 1966," Richard Feigen
Gallery, Chicago

1967

"Art in Process - The Development
of Collage," Finch College Museum of Art,
New York (traveling exhibition circulated by the
American Federation of the Arts through 1968)

"Five Artists Show Collage," Gertrude Kasle
Gallery, Detroit

1968

Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, Ohio

"Destruction Art," Finch College Museum of Art,
New York

"Drawings, New York, 1968," Richard Feigen
Gallery, Chicago

"Paper Is," Monmouth Museum, Lincroft, New Jersey

The University of Puerto Rico, San Juan

1969

A.B. Clossen, Jr., Co., Cincinnati, Ohio

"Combine Works," School of Visual Arts,
New York

Richard Feigen Gallery, Chicago

The following remarks are what I said at the short memorial service the college community held on the twentieth of November, 1984. I remember speaking very slowly; but first looking long at the audience (I wanted to know to whom I was eulogizing Harry Soviak).

Robert Keyser - 22 November '84

If Harry were here today...do you know what he would say to me?... "Keyser, how are we going to get through this?"

He would want us to get over this mourning...get on with it...get on with the living.

He was impatient...but, always prepared. I don't know why but I think of some amusing things: Even if the day was only just a bit overcast, Harry would never be caught without his rubbers...Do you know what he left in his desk?...His umbrella. He thought that Cezanne painted too damn many Mont Sainte Victoires!

...He drew his inspiration from the present...he just wanted to make beautiful things...

...Of course, the tragedy is that he died so young...as though some street-smarts short-circuited.

We know what he meant to us...and it is difficult to stand here and recall those things. I could not even have done this last Sunday in New York at the memorial service. None of us who were there could speak. But Fred Mitchell spoke so eloquently...

...Harry showed a considerate, kind, even tender intelligence in life...if not in death.

For me poetry is a good anchor at these times. Harry liked the work of Marsden Hartley, the painter/poet who wrote:

*It's a gay world after all; I knew it was;
only there are so many things that make it dark and much beside the point
not to say cheaply, utterly out of joint.
I like to call it gay, this world, because
if I didn't know most of these folks like flags in the wind unfurled,
I would be inclined to say - "tiresome world,
troublesome world, how do you get that way?"
But these folks I know, or certainly would want to know it if I didn't, makes it seem like a gay world to me.
Of course tomorrow we might all be feeling different,
truth to tell in all probability will.
I like 'em now very much and that will do, I'll say.*

Harry liked the compression of Hartley's early emblematic paintings...And Harry's own late, wonderful work evoked strong, simple shapes and symbols...like the "amphora" on the wall here. I think he would have liked Auden's play on simple clichés:

*Time will say nothing but I told you so,
Time only knows the price we have to pay;
If I could tell you I would let you know.*

*If we should weep when clowns put on their show,
If we should stumble when musicians play,
Time will say nothing but I told you so...*

*The winds must come from somewhere when they blow,
There must be reasons why the leaves decay;
Time will say nothing but I told you so...*

*Suppose all the lions get up and go,
And all the brooks and soldiers run away;
Will time say nothing but I told you so?
If I could tell you I would let you know.*

Gray Flowers and Etruscan Painting

Watercolor on paper
1978
29 1/4 x 41
Collection of Rachel Bok Goldman,
Chicago

***Oliver Masquerading and
Other Studio Pictures***

Watercolor on paper
1978
29 1/8 x 41
The Estate of Harry Soviak,
Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,
New York

Study of Oliver

Watercolor on paper
1978-79 (approximate date)
18 x 24
Collection of Cynthia Carlson,
New York

Japan IV

Pochoir
1979
25 1/2 x 19 7/8
The Estate of Harry Soviak,
Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,
New York

Still Life with Flowers

Watercolor on paper
1979
41 1/2 x 31 1/4
Collection of Dechert Price & Rhoads,
Philadelphia

Untitled

Charcoal on paper
1979
25 1/2 x 19 7/8
The Estate of Vincent D'Aquila,
New York

Untitled

Charcoal on paper
1979
25 1/2 x 19 3/4
The Estate of Vincent D'Aquila,
New York

Empress

Etching
1980
43 5/8 x 30 1/4
Collection of Edith and Albert Neff,
Philadelphia

Frieze

Pochoir
1980
29 1/4 x 42 1/2
The Estate of Harry Soviak,
Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,
New York

1970

Richard Feigen Gallery, New York

The New Jersey State Museum, Trenton

"New York Correspondence School," Whitney
Museum of American Art, New York

Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania

1971

"Fur and Feathers," Museum of Contemporary
Crafts, New York

Gallery Marc, Washington, DC

Marian Locks Gallery, Philadelphia

The Philadelphia Art Alliance, Pennsylvania

White Chapel Art Gallery, London

Anna Maria Zwerner Gallery, Zurich

1974

The Philadelphia Art Alliance, Pennsylvania

1976

"40 Years of American Collage," Buecker
& Harpsicords, New York

1977

Buecker & Harpsicords, New York

Iran-American Society, Teheran

The New Jersey State Museum, Trenton

The Squibb Gallery, Princeton, New Jersey

1978

Genesis Galleries, New York

"Works on Paper", Moravian College,
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

"Expressions: Earth Art III," Museum of
the Philadelphia Civic Center, Pennsylvania

Salisbury State College, Maryland

"In Celebration of Prints," The Philadelphia
Art Alliance, Pennsylvania

Millersville State College, Pennsylvania

"Still Life Today," Goddard-Riverside
Community Center, New York



*Summer Flowers with Details of a
Persian Miniature*
Watercolor on paper
1973

Turtle Back

Watercolor on paper
1980
42 x 29
Private collection

Interior Etruscan Still Life

Watercolor on paper
1981
39 1/2 x 34 1/2
The Estate of Harry Soviak,
Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,
New York

Malachite Vase

Watercolor on paper
1981
41 5/8 x 29
Collection of Dechert Price & Rhoads,
Philadelphia

Odalisque in Serpentine Robe

Pochoir
1981
22 1/2 x 30 1/2
Lent by the Institute of
Contemporary Art,
University of Pennsylvania,
Philadelphia

Pink Nude - After Matisse

Painted steel
1981
41 1/4 x 29 x 11 1/4
The Estate of Harry Soviak,
Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,
New York

Corner Piece

Watercolor on paper
1981
41 x 29
Lent by the Philadelphia Inquirer and
Daily News,
Pennsylvania

A Little Nude

Painted steel
1982
5 x 10 1/2 x 5
The Estate of Harry Soviak,
Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,
New York

Absinthe Ballerina

Painted steel
1982
10 1/4 x 8 1/2 x 3 3/16
The Estate of Harry Soviak,
Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,
New York

Acrobat

Painted steel
1982
19 3/4 x 5 x 5
The Estate of Harry Soviak,
Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,
New York

1981

"Cross Country '81 - Artists Who Draw,"
Webster College, St. Louis, Missouri

"Emerging Perspectives," The Arts Gallery,
Baltimore, Maryland

Martha Tepper Contemporary Fine Arts,
West Newton, Massachusetts

1982

Pam Adler Gallery, New York

"Art on Paper," Weatherspoon Art Gallery,
Greensboro, North Carolina

"Contemporary Still Lives," The Museum of
Modern Art, New York

"Energism," Arthur Roger Gallery, New Orleans

"Great Big Drawings," Roger Ramsay Gallery,
Chicago

"Great Big Drawings," University Club, Chicago

"Heroic Lyricism," The Tweed Art Gallery,
Plainfield, New Jersey

"Still Life/Interiors," Contemporary Arts
Center, New Orleans

"Twenty-One Artists," Carol Shapiro Gallery,
St. Louis, Missouri

1983

"Affects/Effects II Work by the Faculty of
the Philadelphia College of Art," Philadelphia
Colleges of the Arts, Pennsylvania

"Ceramic Forms in Art," Zim-Lerner Gallery,
New York

"Still Life Today," Goddard-Riverside Community
Center, New York

"Twenty Artists," Carol Shapiro Gallery, St. Louis,
Missouri

1983-84

"Twentieth Century American Watercolor,"
a traveling exhibition curated by Janice C. Oresman
and circulated by the Gallery Association
of New York State (Presented at Philadelphia Colleges
of the Arts, September-October 1983)

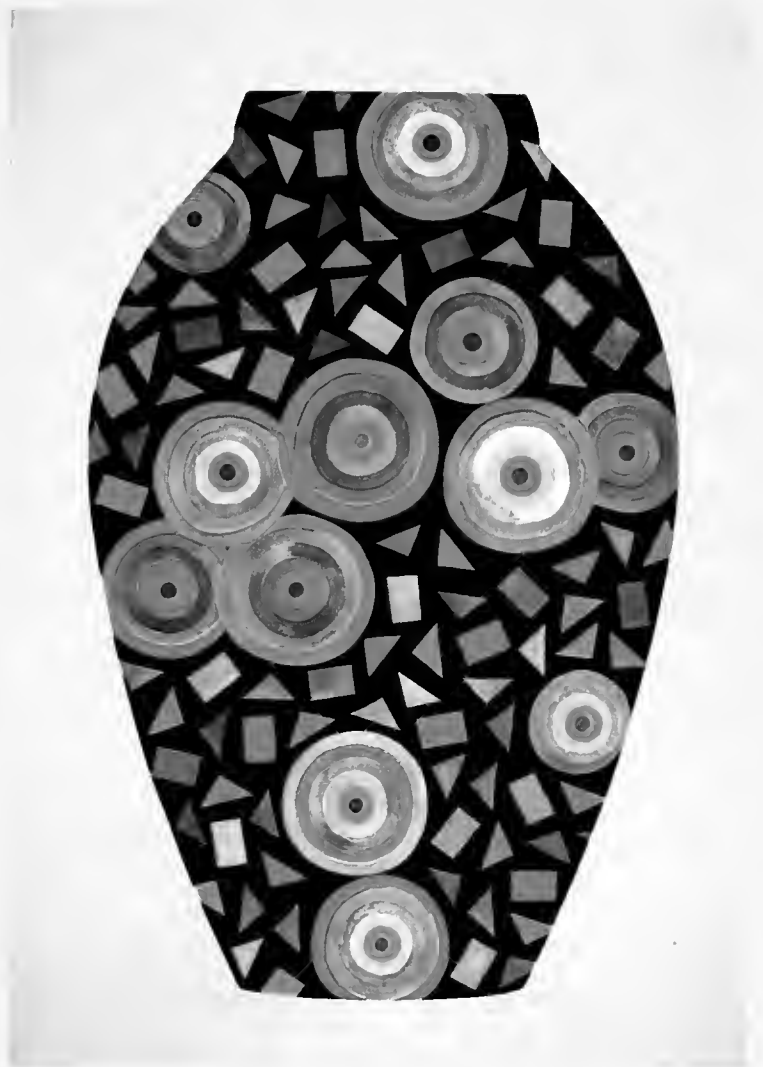
"The Decorative Continues," Pam Adler Gallery,
New York

"Flower as Image in Contemporary Art," Wave Hill,
The Bronx, New York

"Inaugural Exhibition," Pam Adler Gallery, New York



Flowers with Still Life
Watercolor on paper
1979



Turtle Back
Watercolor on paper
1980



Hostess
Painted aluminum
1982

Acrobats

Watercolor on paper
1982
12 1/2 x 9 1/2
Courtesy of The Carlton Gallery,
New York and Philadelphia

Chameleons

Watercolor on paper
1982
21 x 23 7/8
The Estate of Harry Soviak,
Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,
New York

Chariot

Painted steel
1982
15 1/4 x 6 3/8 x 5 3/4
The Estate of Harry Soviak,
Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,
New York

Chicken Leg

Painted aluminum
1982
83 1/2 x 32 1/8 x 32 1/2
The Estate of Harry Soviak,
Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,
New York

Danseur

Painted steel
1982
10 3/4 x 9 3/4 x 4
The Estate of Harry Soviak,
Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,
New York

Dove

Painted aluminum
1982
60 x 12 x 12
Courtesy of The Carlton Gallery,
New York and Philadelphia

Entrance to the Gardens

Watercolor on paper
1982
59 1/2 x 40
The Estate of Harry Soviak,
Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,
New York

Fish Pond, Sunset Boulevard

Watercolor on paper
1982
40 x 50 1/2
The Estate of Harry Soviak,
Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,
New York

*Gate Post and
Heebie Jeebie After Bernini*

Pair of columns
Painted aluminum
1982
84 1/2 x 20 x 20
The Estate of Harry Soviak,
Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,
New York

Public and Corporate Collections

Amerada Hess Corporation, New York

Baer, Marks & Upham, New York

Chase Manhattan Bank, New York

Chemical Bank, New York

Continental Bank, Philadelphia

Dechert Price & Rhoads, Philadelphia

First Pennsylvania Bank, Philadelphia

Home Box Office, New York

Hotel Inter-Continental, New Orleans

IBM, New York

IU International Management Corp., Philadelphia

Illinois Bell Telephone Company

Lehman Brothers, Kuhn & Loeb, New York

Masuda, Funai, Eifert & Mitchell, Chicago

Melhado Flynn, New York

Millersville State College, Pennsylvania

The New Jersey State Museum, Trenton

New Orleans Museum of Art, Louisiana

New York University, New York

The Philadelphia Inquirer & Daily News, Pennsylvania

Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania

Prudential Insurance Company, Newark, New Jersey

The Reader's Digest, New York

RepublicBank, Houston

Simson Thacher & Bartlett, New York

Zale Corporation, Dallas

Lunch with Harry

When Edith Neff and Dolores Gaughan first asked me to say something today at Harry's memorial service, at first I thought, "Why me?" Certainly there were people who knew Harry longer and better than I. After all, there are people here who have worked with Harry for twenty years and I have known Harry for two. Then, I realized that it didn't take long to get to know Harry Sowiak. All you had to do was like lunch. Lunch with Harry was always more than a meal. It was an experience you'd be glad to break any previous engagement for. Harry would simply have to look at you with his sparkly blue eyes from the back of a crowded school elevator and say, "Lunch?", and you would nod "Yes" first and rearrange your schedule later.

Harry loved to share himself with others, and lunch was the perfect vehicle. Once, after asking me to talk to his students about the nature of my work (his generosity included exposing his students to other teachers), he insisted on taking me to lunch. We both sat down eyeing our menus. I asked him if he knew how the Nicoise salad was. "Lousy," he said, then, looking over his half-glasses, said, "Speaking of Nicoise, what do you tell your students about Cezanne?" "Art-marks," I replied. Harry smiled and said, "I like that. I'm going to use it." We both ordered the frittata.

Harry's humor and wit were intoxicating. Often unrepeatable but never forgettable. It wasn't unrepeatable because of its content alone, but more so because it wasn't Harry saying it.

Harry was always inviting us to celebrate with him. We'd see him come to school dressed in his baseball cap, Hawaiian shirt, cowboy boots, a favorite tacky brooch and the indispensable piece of turquoise jewelry. It was always Harry's little Christmas and you were invited.

It's going to be hard for us to think of not having Harry. I'm reminded of a note he left to one of his students while she was out of the studio, frustrated with her painting. "Do we always give up when things get tough?" he wrote. The death of a dear friend seems to tell us that we have no choice but to go on. Perhaps somewhat changed and saddened, but we go on.

Someone said a long time ago (it was St. Augustine) that "Everything is gift." It's going to be difficult and will take some time for us to realize the gift in Harry's passing and we'll all have to do it in our own individual way. It could be as monumental as contemplating our own mortality or as simple as never seeing a turquoise bracelet quite the same.

Anthony Visco

Grand Odalisque

Watercolor on paper
1982
43 1/2 x 63
Collection of Elissa Factor,
Elkins Park, Pennsylvania

Hide and Seek

Watercolor on paper
1982
40 x 60
Collection of Simpson Thacher & Bartlett,
New York

Hostess

Painted aluminum
1982
66 1/2 x 24 x 14
The Estate of Harry Soviak,
Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,
New York

Little Love Birds

Watercolor on paper
1982
20 x 16
Courtesy of The Carlton Gallery,
New York and Philadelphia

Parade

Watercolor on paper
1982
16 x 20
Courtesy of The Carlton Gallery,
New York and Philadelphia

Strongman

Painted steel
1982
12 x 7 1/8 x 4 1/4
The Estate of Harry Soviak,
Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,
New York

Strongman

Watercolor on paper
1982
Watercolor on paper
42 x 29 1/2
Collection of Paul Gedeohn,
New York

Moon Bowl

Watercolor on paper
1982
10 x 12
Collection of Terry Kemper and
Christina Lindstrom,
New York

Untitled (bowl with number)

Watercolor on paper
1982
9 1/2 x 12 1/2
The Estate of Harry Soviak,
Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,
New York

Special Projects

Christmas Card Commissions

"Snow Screen," The Museum of Modern Art,
New York, 1966

"Snow Mountain," Richard Feigen Gallery,
New York, 1967

"Snowburst," Richard Feigen Graphics, Inc., 1968

"Snow Moon 2," Richard Feigen Graphics, Inc., 1969

"Snow Rainbow," The Museum of Modern Art,
New York, 1969

"Snow Snail," The Museum of Modern Art,
New York, 1972

Philadelphia Colleges of the Arts, 1977

Prints

China III

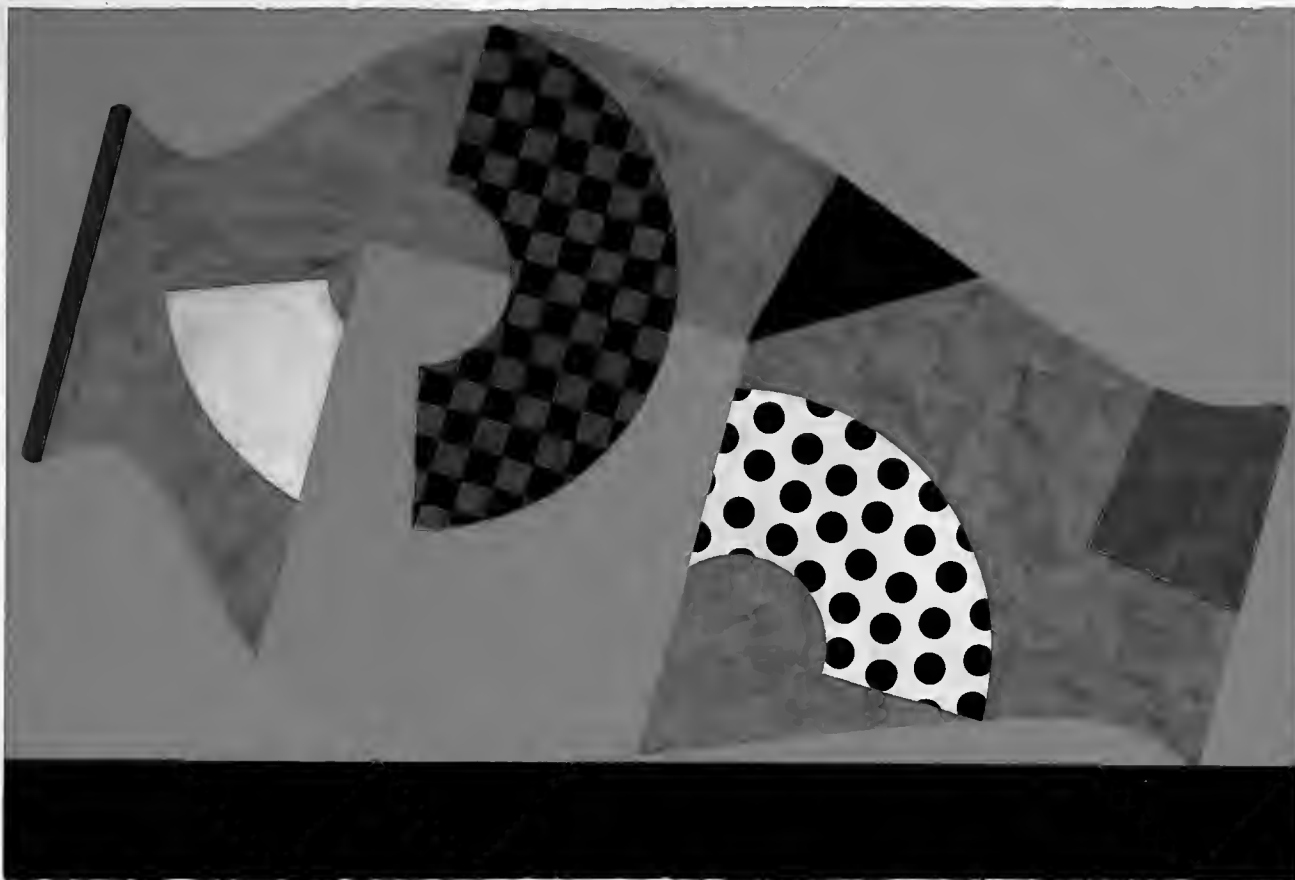
Pochoir
1978
30 x 22 1/2
Edition of 55
Published by Barbara Gladstone Editions,
New York

Japan III

Pochoir
1979
30 x 22 1/2
Edition of 50
Co-published by Orion Editions, New York,
and Marian Locks Gallery, Philadelphia

Japan IV

Pochoir
1979
30 x 22 1/2
Edition of 50
Co-published by Orion Editions, New York,
and Marian Locks Gallery, Philadelphia



Grand Odalisque
Watercolor on paper
1982

Exotic Garden

Mural study for RepublicBank,
Houston; first version
Watercolor and collage on paper
1983
24 7/16 x 49 7/8
The Estate of Harry Soviak,
Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,
New York

Starry Night

Watercolor and collage on paper
1983
45 x 32 1/2
The Estate of Harry Soviak,
Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,
New York

Untitled

Watercolor and collage on paper
1983
40 x 60
The Estate of Harry Soviak,
Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,
New York

Gaudi's Garden

Watercolor and collage on paper
1984
21 5/8 x 34
The Estate of Harry Soviak,
Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,
New York

Goblins

Watercolor and collage on paper
1984
15 1/2 x 26 1/2
Collection of Arthur Williams,
New York

Trophy

Painted steel
1984
75 1/2 x 20 x 14
The Estate of Harry Soviak,
Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,
New York

Untitled

Triptych
Watercolor, pencil and
collage on paper
1984
6 x 6; 7 1/4 x 7 1/4; 6 x 5 1/4
The Estate of Harry Soviak,
Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,
New York

Untitled

Watercolor and collage on paper
1984
16 1/4 x 47
The Estate of Vincent D'Aquila,
New York

Prints

Frieze

1980
29 1/4 x 42 1/2
Edition of 50
Co-published by Orion Editions, New York,
and Marian Locks Gallery, Philadelphia

Empress

Etching
1981
43 1/2 x 30 1/4
Edition of 68
Co-published by Orion Editions, New York,
and Marian Locks Gallery, Philadelphia

Empress (State II)

Etching
1981
43 1/2 x 30 1/4
Edition of 10
Co-published by Orion Editions, New York,
and Marian Locks Gallery, Philadelphia

Odalisque in Serpentine Robe

Pochoir
1981
22 1/2 x 30 1/2
Edition of 120
Published by the
Institute of Contemporary Art,
University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia

Sienna

Pochoir
1981
22 1/2 x 30
Edition of 20
Published by Orion Editions, New York

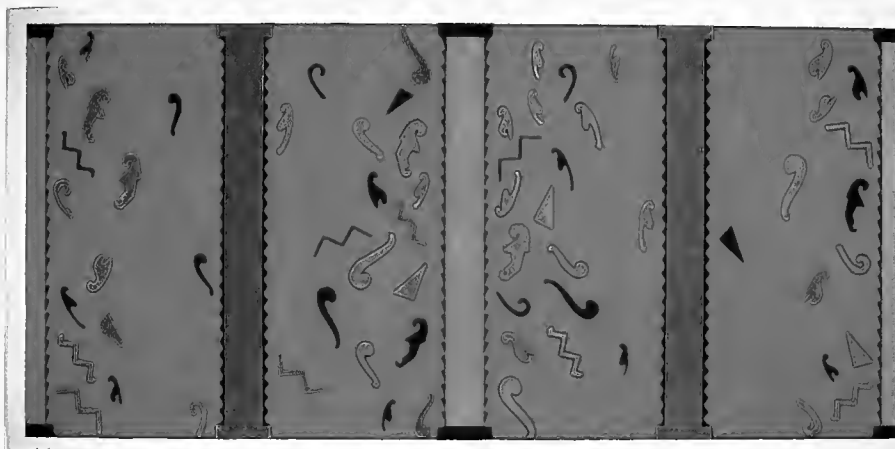
Mural Commission

Exotic Garden

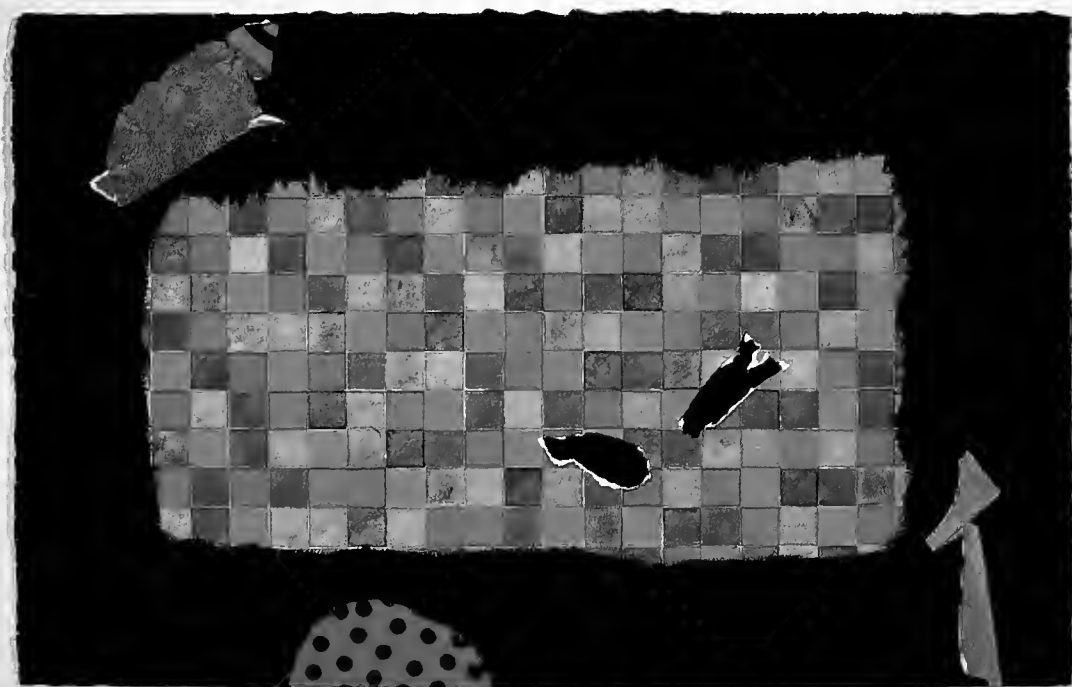
Mixed media
1983
78 x 252
Collection of RepublicBank, Houston



Moon Bowl
Watercolor on paper
1982



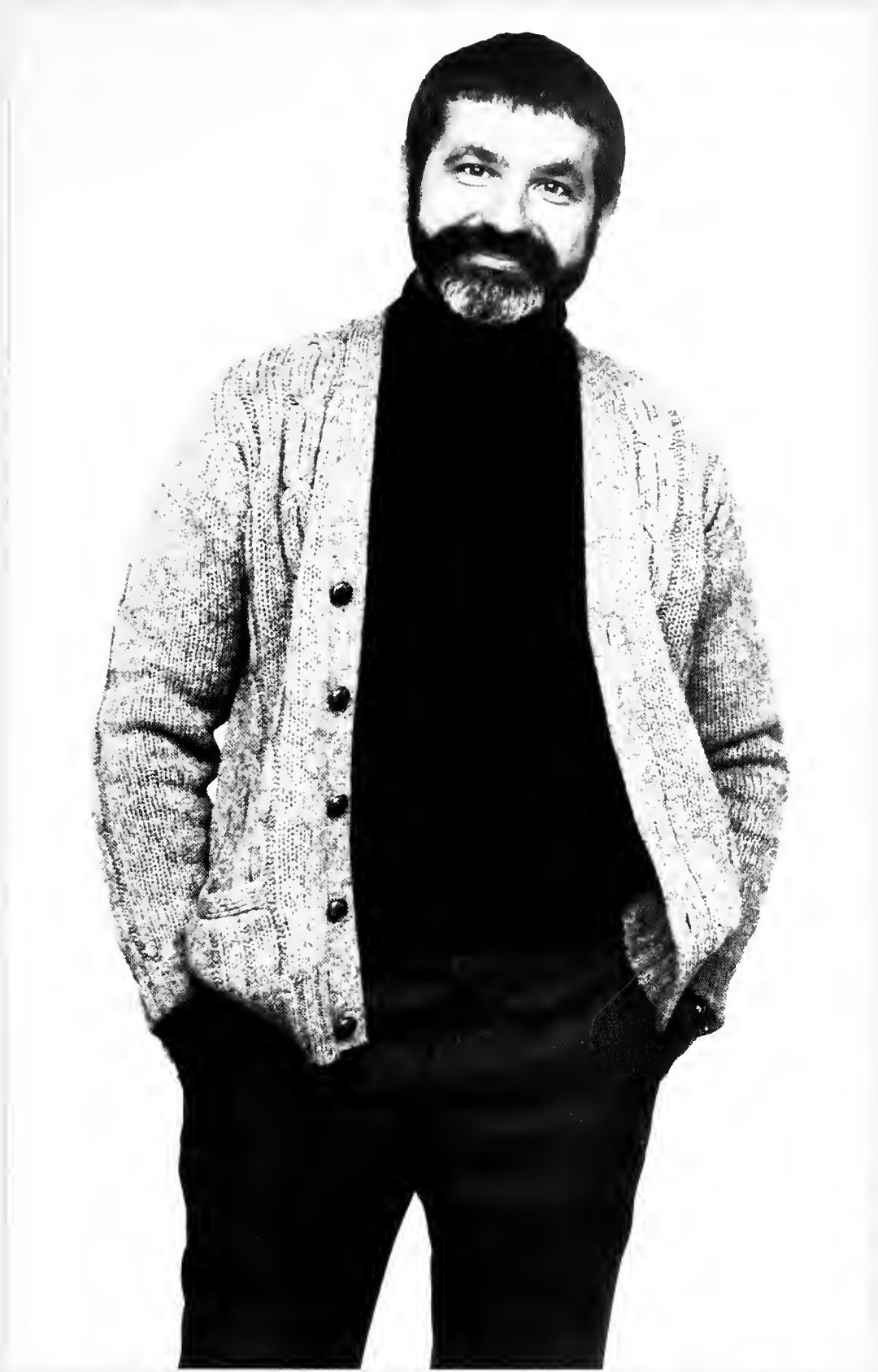
Exotic Garden
Watercolor and collage
on paper
1983



Gaudi's Garden
Watercolor and collage
on paper
1984

"I don't like to be depressed when I go to a gallery or museum. I don't want to be reminded of all the stuff that we have to deal with everyday, that we read about and hear about. Painting is an opportunity for us to make things better, allow us to have a better time or a better experience. I am interested in that in my work. I want my work to bring that to people. I want to give people a lift with what I do...if I can."

Harry Soviak
in an interview with Bill Scott
Brooklyn, New York
July 1978



Harry Soviak
1978-79
Photograph by Peter Meltzer

"My subject matter is by nature pleasurable, and I have arrived at it by a complicated route." 1

Complicated is the last word that would come to mind for anyone acquainted with Harry Saviak or his work. Harry was a warm and gentle man, a first rate story teller and humorist. Though an engaging conversationalist, he was not given to so-called 'artspeak' or any ravelled intellectual discussion of his own work. With seeming ease, he balanced the demands of his two commitments in the arts. While achieving national recognition for his own work, Harry spent twenty-one years commuting from New York to Philadelphia where he taught at Philadelphia Colleges of the Arts (PCA).

Harry Saviak attended the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, where he received both his bachelor (1957) and master (1959) degrees in painting. According to Thomas Stearns, then a fellow student and later a colleague at PCA, two 'schools' of painting existed at Cranbrook: the realists, under the tutelage of Zoltan Sepeshy, and the abstract expressionists lead by Fred Mitchell. Mitchell's camp had Harry's allegiance and fostered his work in this style along with his innate ability with color. The Cranbrook environment was one which attempted to cultivate an overall artistic curiosity by encouraging experimentation in other media. This philosophical view was put into practice with the requirement that students elect a minor interest of study alongside their major. Saviak's choice, like many fellow painters at that time, was fibers, which he studied under Marianne Strengell, then head of the department.

Another significant and formative influence during the Cranbrook years came with the award of a Buenos Aires Convention Fellowship. Under the sponsorship of the American government's Latin American Program, Saviak worked in Haiti from 1958 to 1959, where he taught painting and drawing at the American Embassy and Le Centre d'Art in Port-au-Prince. On his return to Cranbrook, his work demonstrated an upgrading of color and a greater interest in the simplification of form. Stearns recalls a "vivid and amazing group of collage constructions, assembled of matchboxes, spools, cut and torn paper," which Saviak produced during his fellowship.

Upon graduation Saviak moved to New York City, where he found employment in the textile industry as a rug designer for Dorothy Liebes Design (1959-61) and as a fabric designer for both Jack Lenor Larsen, Incorporated (1961-62) and Cohn-Hall-Marx (1962). Though more than likely a means of livelihood, these involvements had an ironic effect of revising Saviak's approach to painting and, fortuitously, bringing him to Philadelphia Colleges of the Arts. Saviak first came to the College as a visiting lecturer in design (1961-62) as part of his association with Jack Lenor Larsen, who had been Director of PCA's Fabric Design department. Ruben Eshkanian, Larsen's successor at PCA, became further familiar with Saviak's work in textile and hired him as an instructor in 1963. He served the department for eight years, before shifting to the Painting/Drawing department where he taught until his death in 1984.

This passage neatly coincides with the work in Saviak's personal studio at the time. In a taped interview with Philadelphia painter Bill Scott, made in 1978, Harry recalled having arrived at something of an impasse with his painting and becoming "suspicious" of what he was doing with it during his first few years in New York. Resolved to "begin all over again," Saviak "started with color, the one thing (I) felt secure about." Thinking of color in "a solid and three dimensional way," interested in "standing it up, layering it," creating color as a physical sensation, Saviak chose fiber, rather than paint, and began making such columns as *French I*, *French V*, *Oriole III* and *Iris*. Freestanding paper tubes ranging in height from 21 inches to nine feet, the sculp-

tures are obsessively wrapped with thin filaments of colored silk or cotton string. Though satisfied, he felt the need to "reduce" even further and restricted himself to the colors of black and white. He continued his investigations constructing pairs of glass covered wood boxes, one black and one white, inside of which he assembled piles of feathers, round wheels of felt, mounds of paper dots or slices of string-wrapped tubes similar to his columns. Eventually color was re-introduced in his further exploration of collage using, for the most part, cut-up reproductions of other artists' work, found images and his own drawing.

It is not hard to see how these box constructions and collages presage Soviak's return to painting. When he began painting again in 1972 it was with watercolor, a medium he first tried at the age of fifteen and continued during his years at Cranbrook. The subjects of these new paintings developed from images in the collages of the 60s: birds, flowers, vases and vessels. *Black Tulips*, 1973, is a prime and impressive example, both formally and technically, of this transitional period.

In his interview with Scott, Soviak viewed the 60s as an "important preparation, a marking of time that allowed moving into areas that were closer (to me)." Once he began painting with watercolor in the 70s, he spent all of his time with it, producing more or less representational and traditional still lifes that were almost always frontal, symmetrical, and set in very shallow or ambiguous space, formal concerns that remained constant throughout his work. With this time honored genre and subjects he was repeatedly drawn to, Soviak began pursuing a more personal vision. When talking with Scott, Soviak revealed that while he admired art movements and individuals identified with those movements, he had always felt a strong affinity with those artists who were outside of them but whose works were still very forceful, such as Redon, Rouault, Rousseau and Cornell, with Matisse being the one exception.

Though reticent to enter into intellectual or historical discussions of art, Soviak did immerse himself privately in the study of art history, from the work of early masters to that of 20th century artists. His home in Brooklyn was filled with art books and magazines, and he surrounded himself with a serious art collection including pieces by Jacques Villon, Louise Nevelson, Ellsworth Kelly, Rouault and friends Paul Gedeohn and Edith Neff, to name but a few. He credited what he happily and humbly felt as his own separateness - his aesthetic freedom - to his ongoing sampling of other artist's works. He also believed that making allowances for "fun" and "joy" in his work, especially noticeable with the anthropomorphic qualities, formal puns and titles of works from the late 70s onward, had grown to become an important, personally liberating factor in his art. By 1978, Soviak felt that his own work had begun to crystallize, and that his direction had become more defined than ever.

In my estimation, and in those of peers and critics alike, this time marks the emergence of Soviak's most authentic and exciting work. 1978 brought on an unprece-

dent intensification of color, an enlargement of scale, and Soviak waged a serious and concomitantly playful settlement of his debt to the ideas of representation and abstraction. Like a good Byzantine iconographer (another art he revered), Soviak transubstantiated subjects into forms or situations that were at once comprehensible and mysterious, creating a limbo between the intelligible and the sensible. Flowers leapt out of vases, floated in space and even disappeared. Vases casually leaned on their sides, aping the voluptuous odalisques of Ingres, eventually swelling and pressing their curves against the edges of the paper to the point of vanishing altogether. Flowers, birds, vessels and their surface ornamentations were reduced to shapes including French curves, circles, zigzags, spirals and some of his own invention, often but not always orchestrated as fields of pattern. *Flowers with Still Life*, *Turtle Back*, *Grand Odalisque* and *Exotic Garden*, pictured in this catalog, illustrate this development.

By 1982, abstraction won out. When it commanded the focus of his full attentions, Soviak began the production of Matisian large-scale cut-out sculptures, totems fabricated of painted aluminum and steel including *Hostess* and the grand pair of pillars titled *Gate Post* and *Heebie Jeebie After Bernini*. It was also during this period that he blended watercolor with his former medium of collage, this time using only elements of his own device rather than found imagery. One of his last works, *Gaudi's Garden*, is a fine example of this combination and, interestingly, one can see its clear descent from the *Untitled* dot studies of 1958. In spite of the many progressive changes in his work, especially those toward the end of his career, Soviak, in fact, frequently referred to his past ideas and artworks. So it was through a complicated route in the 60s and 70s that his work arrived full circle in the 80s.

Harry Soviak's untimely death ended what we are tempted to read as further promise in the large body of new works he made during the last year of his life. But, it is precisely this cycle of completion that is described and celebrated in this exhibition of works by a master painter and colorist who, since his early days as a student, never understood what was 'decorative' about Matisse.

Eleni Cocordas
Director of Exhibitions

1. From an unpublished letter to Nessa Forman,
Art Critic, The Evening Bulletin,
Philadelphia, November 3, 1976.

Conversations with friends and associates Ruben Eshkanian, Paul Gedeohn, Robert Keyser and Edith Neff were helpful in the development of this story. I am especially indebted to Thomas Stearns, sculptor and associate professor at the Philadelphia Colleges of the Arts, and Bill Scott, a painter and writer in Philadelphia, for graciously sharing their information which I have directly quoted throughout. Mr. Scott's taped interview was made in July, 1978 in preparation for his article, "Harry Soviak's Watercolors: Delicate Visions on a Grand Scale." *Arts Exchange*, September - October 1978.

Selected Bibliography

1963

Mixed Media and Pop Art (Buffalo, New York, Albright-Knox Art Gallery).

1964

Suzie Gablik, review, *Artnews*, January, pg. 18.

Donald Judd, review, *Arts Magazine*, March, pg. 69.

Barbara Rose, review, *Art International*, April, pp. 53-54.

1965

White on White (Lincoln, Massachusetts, The DeCordova Museum).

1967

Al Brunelle, review, *Artnews*, September, pg. 14.

Grace Glueck, review, *The New York Times*, May 27.

Elayne H. Varian, **Art in Process - The Visual Development of a Collage** (New York, Finch College Museum of Art).

review, *The Wooster General*, Volume XV, pp. 1,4.

1968

Destruction Art - Destroy to Create (New York, Finch College Museum of Art).

1970

Michael Benedikt, review, *Artnews*, summer issue, pg.68.

"Intense Composites at Marian Locks,"
The Philadelphia Inquirer, November 29.

J. Patrice Marandel, **"Harry Saviak,"**
Art International, November, pp. 44-45.

1971

Furs and Feathers (New York, Museum of Contemporary Crafts).

David Tannous, review, *The Georgetown Spectator*, May 27.

1973

Victoria Donohoe, review, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 28.

1976

Victoria Donohoe, **"Flowery Paintings by Harry Saviak,"** *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 15.

Nessa Forman, review, *The Evening Bulletin*, October 24.

1977

Victoria Donohoe, review, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 23.

1978

Victoria Donohoe, review, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 20.

William P. Scott, **"Harry Saviak's Watercolors: Delicate Visions on a Grand Scale,"**
Arts Exchange, September/October, pp. 32-34.

1979

Expressions: Earth Art III, (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Museum of the Philadelphia Civic Center).

1980

Larry Bartlett, review, *The Times-Picayune*, April 25.

1981

Ronny H. Cohen, **"New Editions,"** *Artnews*, September, pg. 58.

Victoria Donohoe, review, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 20.

Emerging Perspectives (Baltimore, Maryland, The Arts Gallery).

Steve Purchase, review, *The Baltimore Evening Sun*, July 16.

1982

Virginia Fabbri Butera, **"Harry Saviak,"**
Arts Magazine, September, pp. 32-33.

Ralph Pomeroy, **"Harry Saviak,"** *Arts Magazine*, September, pg.6.

1983

Ronny H. Cohen, **"Harry Saviak at Pam Adler,"**
Art in America, January, pp. 126-127.

Cynthia Nadelman, **"Ceramic Forms in Art,"**
Artnews, September, pp. 187, 190.

Janice C. Oresman, **Twentieth Century American Watercolor** (Hamilton, New York, Gallery Association of New York State).

1984

Eleanor Heartney, **"Art in Good Company,"**
TWA Ambassador, March, pp. 37-45.

Mark Ledet, **Imagination** (New Orleans, Louisiana, Hotel Inter-Continental).

1985

Ronny H. Cohen, **"Harry Saviak/Pam Adler Gallery,"** *Artforum*, October, pp. 121-122.

Eleanor Heartney, **"Harry Saviak,"** *Arts Magazine*, April, pg. 4.

Charles LeClair, **The Art of Watercolor: Techniques and New Directions**, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, Inc.) pp. 39-41, 138-139.

Ralph Pomeroy, **Harry Saviak Memorial Retrospective 1958-1984** (New York, Pam Adler Gallery).

Lenders to the Exhibition

Cynthia Carlson,
New York
The Carlton Gallery,
New York and Philadelphia
Dechert Price & Rhoads,
Philadelphia
The Estate of Vincent D'Aquila,
New York
The Estate of Harry Soviak,
Courtesy of Pam Adler, Inc.,
New York
Elissa Factor,
Elkins Park, Pennsylvania
Dolores and Michael Gaughan,
Wyncote, Pennsylvania
Paul Gedeohn,
New York
Barbara Gladstone Gallery,
New York
Rachel Bok Goldman,
Chicago
The Institute of Contemporary Art,
University of Pennsylvania,
Philadelphia
Terry Kemper and Christina Lindstrom,
New York
Robert Keyser,
Quakertown, Pennsylvania
Gabriele Windeck Lee,
Philadelphia
Marian Locks,
Philadelphia
Edith and Albert Neff,
Philadelphia
Alma Newman,
New York
The Philadelphia Inquirer & Daily News,
Pennsylvania
Simpson Thacher & Bartlett,
New York
Arthur Williams,
New York
Private Collection

Acknowledgments

The organization of this exhibition was made possible by a variety of persons and institutions. Their common denominator was the generosity of spirit and resources they offered in support of this memorial tribute to Harry Soviak.

Since the announcement of plans for this exhibition and throughout its many stages, Richard H. Reinhardt, Dean of PCA's College of Art and Design, and colleagues Larry Day, Dolores Gaughan, Robert Keyser, David Lebe, Edith Neff, Thomas Stearns and Anthony Visco were constant sources of information and assistance. Gaughan and Neff, on behalf of the Painting/Drawing Department organized an art lottery to generate funds for a catalog. They secured the donation of artworks for this lottery from the following artists: Edna Andrade, Eugene Baguskas, Jan Baltzell, Morris Berd, George Bunker, Tom Butter, Cynthia Carlson, William Daley, Larry Day, David Fertig, Ruth Fine, Eileen Goodman, Gerald Herdman, Christopher Hodge, Lois Johnson, Jerome Kaplan, David Kettner, Robert Keyser, Nathan Knobler, David Lebe, Edith Neff, Gerald Nichols, Jane Piper, Boris Putterman, Michael Rossman, Karen Saler, Bill Scott, Doris Staffel, Petras Vaskys, Anthony Visco, Ron Walker and Lily Yeh. Gaughan, Neff, and these many artist/donors deserve special recognition for this undertaking. The success of their art lottery, in combination with a generous gift from The J. Aron Charitable Foundation, Inc., New York, made this exceptionally fine publication, designed by PCA Director of Publications Design Joseph Rapone, fully possible. A note of related thanks is also due to the hundreds of subscribers to the lottery.

Other public aid was received for this project. A grant from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts began the implementation of plans for this exhibition. Julie Courtney, Marian Locks, Elsa Weiner Longhauser and Bill Scott, in Philadelphia; Ruben Eshkanian, in West Redding, Connecticut; and Janice C. Oresman, in New York, all provided useful information.

The selection of artworks for this exhibition was, at times, a difficult matter. Harry was a prolific artist whose works were consistently strong, compelling and very beautiful. I extend my gratitude to the lenders of the 70 works in this exhibition for agreeing to share what I finally determined to be among some of the most exemplary and outstanding pieces of Harry's art.

My deepest thanks are reserved for the alliance of five persons who worked with me and my assistant, David C. Masenheimer, on nearly every aspect of this project over the past year: Pam Adler, the late Vincent D'Aquila, Dolores Gaughan, Paul Gedeohn, and Edith Neff. As longtime friends and professional associates of Harry's, their involvement was of critical necessity for this project. Their contributions, however, transcended the satisfaction of concrete project needs. They *wanted* to be a part of this, and their devotion to it, a reflection of their devotion to and deep regard for Harry, was immeasurable.

Board of Trustees

Sam S. McKeel, Chairman
Mary Louise Beitzel
Irvin J. Borowsky
Nathaniel R. Bowditch
Ira Brind
Helen S. Chait
Schuyler G. Chapin
Michael M. Coleman
James L. Crowell
Eleanor Davis
Philip J. Eitzen
Anne Elder
Kermit Hall
Dorrance H. Hamilton
Marvin D. Heaps
H. Ober Hess
Stephen R. Holstad
Bruce W. Kauffman
Nathan Knobler,
Faculty Representative
Berton E. Korman
Irving S. Kosloff
William G. Krebs,
Alumni Trustee
Thomas V. Lefevre
Al Paul Lefton, Jr.
John W. Merriam
Harvey S. Shipley Miller
Sondra Myers
Ronald J. Naples
Joseph Neubauer
Theodore T. Newbold
John C. Pemberton, Jr.
William L. Rafsky
Sydney Roberts Rockefeller
Samuel R. Shipley, III
Peter Solmssen, President
George I. Tyndall,
Alumni Trustee
H. L. Yoh, Jr.

Honorary Trustees

James Eiseman
Josef Jaffe
Bodine Lamont
Ronald K. Porter
Mel Richman
Edith Rosenwald
Philip H. Ward, III
Dorothy Shipley White
Bernice Wintersteen
Howard A. Wolf

Ex Officio Trustees

The Honorable W. Wilson Goode
Mayor of the City of Philadelphia

The Honorable Joseph Coleman,
President of City Council,
City of Philadelphia

Exhibitions Council

Larry Mitnick, Chairman
Edna Andrade
James Crowell
Warren Rohrer
Donald Shanosky

Richard H. Reinhardt
Dean, College of Art and Design

Eleni Cocordas
Director of Exhibitions

Exhibitions Program Staff

Eleni Cocordas
Director of Exhibitions

David C. Masenheimer
Assistant to the Director

